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EAST TIMOR

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Speech in the context of Miscellaneous

Speaker: Gibson Mr G.D.

Electorate: MORETON
Party: ALP
Government: YES

Interjectors: FERGUSON

EAST TIMOR

Mr GIBSON (Moreton) (10.47 a.m.)--I move:

That this House:

(1) congratulates the UN Commission on Human Rights for adopting a resolution highly critical of the human rights situation in the Indonesian-occupied territory of East Timor;

(2) congratulates the Australian Government for supporting the resolution;

(3) calls upon the Australian Government to persuade the Indonesian Government to comply with paragraph 9 of the resolution by enabling the UN special rapporteurs on torture and on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions and the UN working group on arbitrary detention and on enforced or involuntary disappearances to discharge their mandates in accordance with the terms of the resolution; and

(4) welcomes the resumption of talks under the auspices of the Secretary-General of the UN to arrive at a just, comprehensive and internationally acceptable solution to the question of East Timor.

This is the fifth speech in this place and the second motion that I have moved on the question of East Timor. When it came to preparing my notes in support of this motion, I reviewed what I had said on those previous occasions. It will come as no surprise to honourable members that, after reading these prior contributions and reviewing what has occurred in that time frame, I experienced a range of emotions in response.

Firstly, anger: I was angry that after 18 years of bloodshed, terror, torture and abuse suffered by East Timorese, 18 years of resolutions by the UN General Assembly and Security Council and other arms of the UN and 18 years of pontificating, posturing and preaching by a variety of national and international figures, Indonesia is still able to get away with thumbing its nose at the world while maintaining its chains of bondage around the territory of East Timor.

I was also frustrated that all the efforts of the many caring and compassionate people around the world who are genuinely seeking a fair resolution to this matter have not been able to advance the cause one inch. I was ashamed that my own party, along with our Opposition colleagues when they were in government, had allowed these actions to continue and had given official recognition to an act of invasion and a reign of terror. I was despairing for the thousands of East Timorese who still today live in fear because of the continuing repression and physical abuse that are the hallmarks of Indonesia's military occupation of East Timor. But, overwhelmingly, I was determined to maintain my efforts to pursue a just and lasting peace and resolution which fulfils the aspirations of the East Timorese people.

The motion before the House today seeks to highlight the most recent international expression of opinion about Indonesia's policies in controlling East Timor. It joins a very long line of other resolutions, actions and decisions, severely criticising the Indonesian Government for maintaining a regime of official abuse, torture and murder, to control the population of East Timor.

Indonesia is probably second only to South Africa for racking up condemnatory resolutions around the world about its actions in East Timor--and that is not a very good record to achieve. The international community has once again expressed the view that the United Nations should insist on gaining access to the disputed territory to examine and report on the questions of torture, extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, arbitrary detentions and disappearances.

I am pleased that the Australian Government finally agreed to support this resolution at the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva, in contrast to its previous position where it had tried desperately to prevent Indonesia's activities from being placed under the international spotlight. If, as Indonesian propaganda would have us believe, the situation in East Timor is now normal and there is little unrest or disturbance by resistance forces, why will Indonesia not allow objective, international investigators in to examine the situation? The reason, of course, is that there is still a lot to hide.

Australia must follow up its support for this resolution with some concerted efforts to achieve its implementation. It is very disappointing to witness the Australian

Government--my government--now appearing to back-pedal from its previous commitment. I have constantly been advised that our positive relationship with the Indonesian Government enables us to have some influence over its actions and activities on human rights issues. I am afraid I have seen little evidence of the truth of this claim.

I believe the Indonesian authorities treat our protestations and pleadings with contempt and ridicule. I have not witnessed any lessening of the chains of bondage around, or the continuous harassment and abuse of, East Timorese people because of our special relationship. In fact, the last 18 months have probably been the worst in a decade for the inhabitants of this territory.

I remind honourable members of the arrests, beatings, torture and murder of hundreds of East Timorese that both preceded and followed the November 1991 Dili massacre. I remind honourable members of the massacre itself; the killing of over 100 innocent, unarmed civilians by Indonesian troops at Santa Cruz cemetery in Dili. I remind honourable members of the arrest and jailing of some of the East Timorese involved in these protests, and of the farcical slap on the wrist meted out to the troops who perpetrated this massive crime. I remind honourable members of the arrest, torture, trial and sentencing to life imprisonment of the East Timorese resistance leader Xanana Gusmao. Where have Australia's efforts had any impact on this record?

Indonesia does not support or respect human rights. Its political system is a mockery of democracy. Its military exercises unfettered power throughout Indonesian society. Its judicial system is a joke that denies any semblance of fairness or natural justice. Its continuing suppression of dissent and its ruthless use of violence and intimidation is contrary to all international conventions and treaties.

Xanana Gusmao has now been sentenced to life imprisonment for fighting for freedom for his people. East Timor was invaded by Indonesian troops in December 1975 and has been militarily occupied and suppressed since that time. Gusmao is a political prisoner--a leader of his people seeking justice, fair treatment and self-determination for East Timorese. Will Australia's good offices with Indonesia help Xanana Gusmao gain his freedom?

It is time for Australia and the other signatories to the UN Commission on Human Rights to back their words and protestations with some definitive action. Pleas for reconciliation will continue to fall on deaf ears in Indonesia, unless they are backed up by hard economic consequences. Due to its treatment of Xanana Gusmao and its continuing repression, Indonesia should no longer enjoy the respect of the international community.

If Indonesia fails to accede to the demands of the resolution of the UN Commission on Human Rights and the previous resolutions over the past 18 years of the General Assembly and the Security Council, it should be suspended from membership of the United Nations. The UN Security Council should act towards Indonesia in the same way that it has acted towards South Africa, Iraq, Yugoslavia and the Khmer Rouge when they have failed to implement Security Council decisions. It should impose economic sanctions against Indonesia.

The truth is that nothing less than this response will force Indonesia to the negotiating table to resolve the question of East Timor. Does Australia have the courage of its convictions on the importance of human rights and the commitment to the right of self-determination, as demonstrated in our position in other international conflicts, to stand up to Indonesia on this matter?

I conclude my comments with some extracts from Xanana Gusmao's defence plea to the Dili district court, a plea he was refused permission to deliver by the mockery of a legal system operating in Indonesia. He pleads:

(1) The question of East Timor is the responsibility of the international community, a question of international law. It is a case in which universal principles are at stake, a case where the decolonisation norms of the UN have been manipulated, a case where Indonesia has disregarded the resolutions of the UN, a case therefore of the flagrant violation of the principles of the Non-Aligned Movement, and of the universal pattern of law, peace and justice.

(2) This court claims that it is trying me for crimes committed against the Indonesian State and for the illegal possession of firearms. I know that everything has been arranged for me to be convicted.

(3) The ones who should be standing before an international court are, in the first place, the Indonesian government for crimes committed in the past 17 years in East Timor; the US administration which gave the green light to the invasion on 7 December 1975 and has since given military aid and political support for Indonesia's genocide in East Timor; the governments of Australia and

western Europe for their policy of complicity towards Indonesia; and finally, the Portuguese government for its grave irresponsibility in the decolonisation of East Timor.

The UN recognises as legitimate all means of opposition to the colonial presence in any part of the world where people are fighting for liberation. My struggle and the resistance of my people and of Falintil. . . should be placed in this context, standing above Indonesian law.

(4) . . . the UN does not recognise Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor, a sovereignty which was imposed by the means of force, by the practice of violence and the systematic violation of the most fundamental human rights.

(5) I appeal to the international community to understand that it is time to show that the New World Order is about to begin. This requires acts that will bring to an end the situation inherited from the past.

(6) I appeal to all friends of East Timor, parliamentarians from Europe, America, Japan and Australia, to go on pressing their own governments to change the double standards applied to similar cases where systematic violations of UN resolutions occur, as in the cae of Indonesia's behaviour regarding East Timor.

(7) I appeal to the Secretary-General of the UN to ensure that the solution he seeks for East Timor is based on universal principles and international law. *(Time expired)*

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER (Mr Jenkins)--Is the motion seconded?

Mr Ferguson--I second the motion and reserve my right to speak.